

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9592

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E. O.11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJ: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS

REF : ISLAMABAD 4482

SUMMARY: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE DURING PAST WEEK
FOCUSED ON CONTINUING HARASSMENT OF POLITICAL
OPPOSITION, MOST RECENTLY IN PUNJAB. BILL ESTABLISHING
FEDERAL SECURITY FORCE (I. E., FEDERAL POLICE CONSTABULARY)
PASSED, AND MULTI- PARTY FACT- FINDING MISSION TO BALUCHISTAN
APPOINTED. BUDGET SCHEDULED FOR PRESENTATION JUNE 9.
POSSIBLE RECOGNITION OF BANGLADESH REPORTEDLY
DISCUSSED IN MEETING BETWEEN BHUTTO AND SOME ASSEMBLY MEMBERS.
ATMOSPHERE OF MALAISE APPEARS TO BE SETTING IN NOT
DISSIMILAR TO CONFIDENCE CRISIS OF LAST SUMMER. END SUMMARY.

1. SECOND WEEK OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WITNESSED PASSAGE
OF BILL ESTABLISHING CONTROVERSIAL FEDERAL SECURITY
FORCE, CONSIDERATION OF SEVERAL MINOR BILLS, AND UNSUCCESS-
FUL EFFORTS BY OPPOSITION MEMBERS TO DISCUSS
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HARASSMENT OF UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (UDF) LEADERS DURING THEIR JUST CONCLUDED TOUR OF PUNJAB (LAHORE 652). FEDERAL SECURITY BILL EASILY PASSED DESPITE OPPOSITION PROTESTS THAT SECURITY FORCE WOULD BECOME POLITICAL TOOL OF GOVERNMENT. SECURITY FORCE WAS CHARGED WITH JUST SUCH ROLE LATER IN WEEK WHEN UDF WAS PREVENTED FROM HOLDING PUBLIC MEETING IN LAHORE. CHARGES BY UDF MEMBERS THAT THEY WERE ATTACKED ON TRAIN BRINGING THEM FROM LAHORE TO RAWALPINDI OCCASIONED MORE FIERY EXCHANGES IN ASSEMBLY. ON BOTH MATTERS, SPEAKER FINESSED OPPOSITION ARGUMENTS IN WHAT APPEARED TO EMBOFF WHO WAS PRESENT AS RULINGS CLEARLY BIASED IN FAVOR OF GOVERNMENT.

2 . GOP FINALLY ACQUIESCED TO OPPOSITION DEMANDS FOR ASSEMBLY FACT- FINDING MISSION TO BALUCHISTAN. MULTI- PARTY GROUP HAS BEEN SELECTED, WITH REPRESENTATION FROM ALL PARTIES INCLUDING NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY. GROUP IS TO VISIT BALUCHISTAN AND REPORT BACK TO ASSEMBLY WITHIN TWO WEEKS. IN ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT, FORMER PEOPLES' S PARTY LAW MINISTER KASURI ANNOUNCED JUNE 6 HE HAD JOINED ASGHAR KHAN' S TEHRIK- I- ISTIGLAL.

3. BUDGET SCHEDULED FOR PRESENTATION JUNE 9. BUDGET SESSION LIKELY TO CONTINUE THROUGH FIRST WEEK OF JULY. CURRENT PLANNING CALLS FOR RECONVENING OF ASSEMBLY LATER IN JULY AFTER SENATE SELECTED TO ELECT PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT .

4. BHUTTO MET WITH NUMBER OF ASSEMBLY MEMBERS JUN 2 ALONG WITH FRONTIER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. PRESS REPORTS STATE ONLY ABOUT ONE- THIRD OF PRO- GOVERNMENT MEMBERS ATTENDED, LEADING OPPOSITION DAILY DAWN TO SUGGEST THAT SPARSE TURN- OUT INDICATED CONSIDERABLE DISILLUSIONMENT WITHIN PEOPLES' PARTY. (ASSEMBLY ATTENDANCE THIS SESSION TO DATE BARELY SUFFICIENT TO ENABLE QUORUM.) PRESS REPORTS, CONFIRMED BY MEMBERS PRIVATELY, STATE THAT RECOGNITION OF BANGLADESH DURING CURRENT ASSEMBLY SESSION WAS ONE MAJOR TOPIC OF TALKS WITH BHUTTO.

5. COMMENT: PASSAGE OF CONSTITUTION HAS NOT ALTERED PATTERN OF TENDENTIOUS ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS. HOWEVER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHILE GOP HAS AGAIN BARED STICK IN TREATMENT OF UDF DURING PUNJAB TOUR, IT IS SIMULTANEOUSLY BRANDISHING CARROT BY PERMITTING RELATIVELY IMPARTIAL REPORTING OF OPPOSITION VIEWS AND COMPLAINTS IN MEDIA AND BY AGREEING TO BALUCHISTAN FACT- FINDING MISSION. NONETHELESS, WE SENSE OPPOSITION IN ASSEMBLY AND OUTSIDE IS FEELING BELEAGUED INDEED AT THIS JUNCTURE. MOREOVER, CONTINUED

RESORT BY PEOPLES' PARTY TO COERCIVE TACTICS OF PREVIOUS
GOVERNMENT, IRREGULAR PARLIAMENTARY SITUATION IN BALUCHIS-
TAN, RUMORS OF CONTINUING UNREST IN MILITARY SERVICES,
CONTINUED STALEMATE OVER POW' S, PEOPLES' PARTY INTERNAL
CONFLICTS, AND DISCONTENT OVER RISING PRICES SUGGEST THAT
ANOTHER CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE SIMILAR TO THAT EXPERIENCED
DURING 1972 SIND LANGUAGE RIOTS COULD BE IN THE OFFING.
IN ANY CASE, BHUTTO HAS, AS USUAL, FULL PLATTER OF
PROBLEMS BEFORE HIM.
SOBER

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